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Viewing cable 09BUENOSAIRES142, C) ARGENTINA: CFK'S STREAM-OF-CONSCIOUSNESS ON PRESIDENT OBAMA

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- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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#09BUENOSAIRES142.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09BUENOSAIRES142	2009-02-11 18:25	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Buenos Aires

Appears in these articles:

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SUBJECT: (C) ARGENTINA: CFK'S STREAM-OF-CONSCIOUSNESS ON PRESIDENT OBAMA

REF: A. 08 BUENOS AIRES 1539

[1](#)B. BUENOS AIRES 0107

Introduction

¶1. (C) Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (CFK) has made a series of positive comments about President Obama dating from last August. CFK's words signal that she hopes to turn a new page in bilateral relations and reflect genuine admiration for our new president and the process that brought him to power. In her most recent comments, CFK is also likely trying to offset any negative effects of her presence in Cuba and Venezuela during President Obama's inauguration and first days in office. In domestic political terms, CFK may also be seeking to garner a bit of the shine being given off by President Obama (who has a much more positive image in Argentina than CFK does at the moment). A number of her recent comments have drawn comparisons between President Obama and herself, her husband, Nestor Kirchner (NK), and even the policies of Juan Peron. Those comparisons also underscore the Argentina-centric views of the world with which CFK (and her husband) views the United States.

¶2. (C) Nevertheless, it has been clear for months that CFK has been hoping that her administration could get off to a new start with the new U.S. Administration. She keenly observed the U.S. presidential election race, and she continues to speak often of the importance for the United States and the world of President Obama's election. CFK told the Ambassador that she and her husband, former President Nestor Kirchner (NK), spent many evenings in their Olivos residence watching television coverage of and sharing observations about the race, from the Iowa caucuses through the party conventions and the subsequent months of campaigning. While CFK was an early supporter of Hillary Rodham Clinton's candidacy, it took her little time to notice President Obama's skills on the campaign trail, the way in which his campaign used the internet, and his appeal to younger voters. With his election, that interest morphed into something more intense, and has continued to intensify since the inauguration. End introduction.

¶2. (U) A selection of CFK's public comments about candidate and President Obama follow. We've also included a brand-new comment by Nestor, her political partner and the government's grand strategist:

-- August, 2008: ""Today, our relationship with the U.S. is, as usual, normal and serious, just as our relationship with every country in the world should be...the fact that an African-American runs for U.S. President, like Senator Obama, someone who has really taken me by surprise due to his speech and his really quite different approach to subjects, really reveals an open-minded American society and a truly surprising and admirable vitality in a country in which 40 or 50 years ago an African-American leader could be killed or (where) he was not able to share schools, buses, or public places with white-skinned people."" (Press conference, August 2008.)""

-- August, 2008: ""First and foremost, the cycle that just opened in your (CNN reporter who asked first question) country is a big milestone in one of the most exhilarating epochs in history, the fight against discrimination and for equal opportunities."" (Press conference, August 2008.)

-- November, 2008, following a call from President-elect Obama: ""He (Obama) told me that he wanted very much to meet me and visit Buenos Aires because during his university career he read Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortazar. So I took the opportunity and invited him to visit us."" (Discussion with reporters during November 2008 tour of the Maghreb.)

-- November, 2008: ""Yesterday, I listened to U.S. President-elect Barack Obama, who was kind enough to call me to greet me when I was in Tunis. I heard the President of the most important country and economy in the world, where the (economic) crisis was born, about his plans to tackle the crisis, and I heard him speak about rebuilding

schools, building bridges and houses. He sounded just like the Kirchner of 2003, when he went out to the province of Buenos Aires saying what we should do in terms of infrastructure in order to reactivate the economy. And I also recalled how some laughed at us; perhaps when the U.S. President says those things, he may sound more glamorous or E

those things become more important. However, the truth is that they are talking about something we proposed as one of the basic tools to reach the economic reactivation..." (November 2008, after returning from Maghreb tour.)

-- November, 2008: "Many will congratulate you for successfully interpreting the dreams and hopes of the American people. I wish to join in those well-deserved expressions of admiration... It is no doubt a time of great joy and yet we must remember those men and women who made the greatest sacrifice in the fight for a society of equals, by giving their own lives. When I read the account of the lynching of three students in Mississippi, I recognized the feeling of community with the youths that were starting to rebel in our own country. The same ages, the same generosity, the same tragedy. Just as we pay homage to our companions fallen in that epic, I pay heartfelt tribute to those who paved the way for hope in your country. Such a communion of sacrifice and rebelliousness, of solidarity and respect for justice, is what you will find between my administration and your people, with the determination to advance relentlessly towards a fair and free world...

We have a great opportunity to eradicate poverty, discrimination and inequality in our societies. As you pointed out during your campaign, this requires more education, more health and more opportunities, and certainly more dialogue between the peoples and their leaders...I am sure that we can count on you and please be assured of my sincere friendship." (Congratulatory letter to the President-Elect, November 2008). (Ref A)

-- December, 2008: "I do believe the blockade (of Cuba) will end up being reconsidered. We have high hopes in the new Obama administration, and we expect him to take measures that will lower the historic level of confrontation with the island and this will surely bring the end of the blockade." (Press conference at end of Latin American and Caribbean Summit, December 17, 2008.)

-- January, 2009: "It would be unreal if I did not refer to something that has occurred today, which is the first African-American President taking over in the country which turned out to be the first hegemonic power in the world following the fall of the Berlin Wall. I should say that I believe that Barack Obama's speech today really confirms our positive expectations." (January 20 speech at University of Havana.)

-- January, 2009: "As a matter of fact, when I listened to the new U.S. President Barack Obama, as I said in Havana, our good expectations of him were absolutely confirmed. When we hear from him that security is important but that principles, and therefore human rights, are more important and, as a consequence, they should not be subordinate to security, when we hear that they are going to build bridges and infrastructure that will lead to the growth of the U.S. economy, when we hear that the growth itself is not enough to improve the standard of living of regular people, and as if all this were not enough, that the world has changed and that we should change with it, this does nothing but reaffirm the road that we have chosen ever since 2003...I would say that for an African-American to be elected U.S. President many things had to happen in the world and in the United States, and that perhaps for an awkward youth to be elected Argentine President in 2003 many other things had also occurred in Argentina, because history is not made up only of chances, but is based on causality. Many things have happened for a lanky youth (i.e., Nestor Kirchner) to reach

the Argentine presidency and for an African-American to reach the White House."" (January 28 remarks after returning from visit to Cuba and Venezuela.)

-- February, 2009: ""When the other day I hear the President of the most powerful country in the world say that trade unions are not part of the problem but part of the solution and that he also wants big and prosperous trade unions along with big and prosperous corporations, I do not know if Obama read Peron, but let me tell you it looks like it. As a matter of fact, you know, I said it the other day in Havana - I have high expectations, just like everyone else in almost all the world, in the decisions to be made by the first U.S. African-American President."" (February 5, 2009 remarks at signing of agreement with Aerolineas Argentina workers.)

-- February, 2009: ""Such a big fuss was raised when I said that in Buenos Aires (about the parallels between Peron and

Obama). Sincerely, when I hear things from Obama, like his wanting to make strong, prosperous labor unions part of the solution, or that the market generates wealth but needs to be supervised and controlled; or when he talks about the role of the state in security, health, or education, it seems to me, like I said half in jest and half seriously, that Obama must have read Peron."" (Press conference in Madrid, February 9, 2009)

-- February, 2009: ""(President Obama) is implementing the same policies we have been carrying out since 2003. Obama must rebuild the United States, which fell because of the influence of neo-liberal policies and the Washington Consensus. We sincerely hope that things go well for Obama ...for the sake of the United States and for the world as well. ... If Argentina is struggling against the effects of the crisis, it's because we've been disciplined, meticulous, but we're suffering the consequences of an unprecedented crisis."" (February 10: Nestor Kirchner speaking at political rally.)

COMMENT

13. (C) While both CFK and Nestor have regularly made comments critical of various aspects U.S. policy, CFK's effusive statements about our new president seem to reflect genuine admiration, and it seems likely that her positive statements about Obama reflect a fervent hope that some of his stardust will fall on her governance. The Kirchners apparently do not see a contradiction between critical comments -- such as their constant railing against a caricature version of the ""Washington Consensus,"" which they blame for most of the world's economic problems, and their professed admiration for President Obama. CFK can therefore be expected to utter further unpleasantries especially about past flawed U.S. economic governance and the international economic superstructure, even as she continues to hope for further contact and collaboration with the new U.S. President.

WAYNE